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Globalization and Mental Health

A Special Issue of *Global Social Policy*

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Globalization has significant consequences for mental health. Social processes associated with globalization, such as employment pressures, migration (including migration of health human resources), poverty, culture, and social change can be risk or protective factors for disorders such as suicide, substance abuse, antisocial behaviour, anxiety, and depression. Globalization also has effects on the provision of health and social care to those with mental health problems, whether or not these have been generated by globalization.

It has recently been estimated by the British economist, Lord Richard Layard (2005), that mental health problems cost the economy more than poverty (http://www.strategy.gov.uk/downloads/files/mh_layard.pdf), and yet it is an issue that is seldom included in the range of problems linked to globalization. In the recent first issue of a new journal, *Globalization and Health* (2005) (<http://www.globalizationandhealth.com>), there was not a single reference to mental health issues.

However, this low profile is beginning to change. The general case for a step change in policies for mental health was set out by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002 in its Mental Health Global Action Programme (mhGAP) (http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/265.pdf). In September 2006, the UK Institute of Psychiatry's third international mental health conference took place, on the theme 'People on the Move' (<http://www.iop.kcl.ac.uk/iopweb/virtual/?path=/international/conference/>). The large majority of plenary and parallel session speakers were from low and middle income countries, with significant representation from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia. On 3 September 2007, Vikram Patel, in

parallel to this special edition of GSP, launched a special series on a global call for a mental health strategy for LCDs in *The Lancet* (see *The Lancet*, 2007 (370): 859–77 at <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673607612380/abstract>). This call for a global mental health strategy was launched by Professor Jeff Sachs, the WHO, and a number of senior international figures in health policy.

The current special issue of GSP, edited by Nick Manning and Vikram Patel, adds to this growing debate.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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